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How School Content Filters Block Content and Learning

Filed in: [Libraries](#), [Safety](#), [Schools](#), [Social Media](#)
Filed by [Christine C.](#)

2.1.10 | Are school content filters keeping you and your students from learning and sharing information?

The [Student Press Law Center](#) looks at how the lack of access to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter is frustrating journalism and writing students—they're unable to use the same tools that professional journalists now consider essential for writing and promoting news stories.

SPLC writer Joanna Brenner provides examples of creative thinking. One adviser gets around the ban by allowing students to use a pay-by-the-minute phone that he keeps for use in the journalism classroom so students can post breaking-news updates to Twitter.

Mark Webber, student newspaper adviser at Vidal M. Trevino School of Communications and Fine Arts in Laredo, Texas, said if the school administration doesn't object to students tweeting, then he would see about using Facebook or MySpace.

"I want to get them used to the idea of it's not something that's necessarily difficult to use, but it's just part of what's expected of journalists nowadays," he said. "A lot of what we do is ethical behavior and I'd like to do be able to show an appropriate way to conduct yourself on Facebook, and how not to."

Linda Rodriguez, one of Webber's students, said access to social media would help with story writing as well as promotion.

"There's an article in our paper about YouTube," Rodriguez said. "It's a student analyzing videos on YouTube, and criticizing them, but the YouTube Web site is blocked, so we can't actually look at the videos to see what he's talking about. [Administrators] might think they are protecting us, but they are deterring us from learning more."

Students without access to social media also may miss out on building important connections.

"Through social media, you get to network with not only people in your own area, but people across the country," said Meg Roberts, promotions associate for New Media Strategies. "Never before has a high school senior been able to jump on Twitter and engage with a prominent reporter from the New York Times."

[Continue reading](#) this great SPLC story for more information on the legal aspects of content filters and censorship.

Plus: [School Library Journal](#) talked recently with Buffy Hamilton, a high school librarian in Canton, Ga., who argues that media specialists should try to overcome digital roadblocks by presenting reasoned and well-resourced arguments.

"I think in some cases, out of an effort to be proactive, keep children safe, and avoid litigation, schools may be erring on the safe side," said Hamilton, who blogs at [The Unquiet Librarian](#). "I think what librarians are calling for is a way to have a more active voice in that decision-making process."

Hamilton shares strategies in the webinar "Fighting the Filter," which she conducted earlier this month as an online seminar for the the Central Jersey Regional Library Cooperative. Also check out this [Q&A with Hamilton](#) at the American Library Association.

[Strategies for Fighting Internet Filtering](#)



Photo: Mike Licht, [NotionsCapital.com](#)

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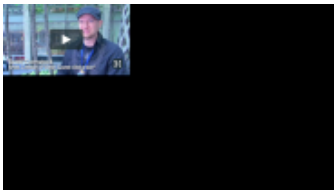
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